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A Time for all Things;

B E I N G

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S . E R M O N ,

DELIVERED AT

H A L I F A X.

By THOMAS TAYLOR. *R*

*For there is a Time there for every Purpose and
every Work. Eccl. iii. 17.*

Εξαγοραζόμενοι τον καιρον.

Eph. v. 16.

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A.

S E R M O N, &c.

E C C L E S. iii. I.

To every thing there is a Season, and a Time to every Purpose under Heaven.

AS the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, so the carnal mind is enmity against God; 'tis not subject to him; despiseth his government, rejecteth all his counsel, and will have none of his reproof. This enmity manifests itself in various forms, and in general, by turning every blessing into a curse; rejecting the word of God, so that the same word which was intended to be the favour of life, proves the favour of death. Sometimes the Word of Truth is ridiculed, made the subject of dull and prophane wit, or a variety of objections are found against it, to invalidate the force and evidence which the painful truth will impart to such as follow their own imaginations. Many attempts have been made to pervert the Oracles of Truth, in order to catch at some pretence to keep their unruly appetites in countenance. Hence it is that some would justify unholy anger, because that passion is sometimes ascribed to God; and because our Saviour is said to have *looked upon them with anger,* being grieved with the hardness of their hearts*; and because St. Paul says, *† Be ye angry and sin not*; so even uncleanness and lies have fought

* Mark iii. 5. — † Eph. iv. 26.

a refuge in the Scriptures of Truth and Purity. In like manner, vain, empty sports and pastimes have pleaded this chapter in their behalf, as if it were to contradict all the bible besides. For, talk to the vain sporters and pleasure-takers, the card-players, the horse-racers, the frequenters of play-houses, and vain assemblies, the tavern hunters, and the alehouse fots, the vain talkers, and idle song singers; I say, speak to these, and warn them to flee from the wrath to come; to seek the Lord while he may be found, they will usually return you this impertinent answer, Solomon says, *There is a time for all things.* What drunkard, liar, thief or unclean wretch may not plead the same? My design is to attempt rescuing this passage out of the hands of Scripture, as well as Time-murderers. One thing more may be premised, and that is, the frame and structure of this Book is of the Dialogue kind, and, as is supposed; betwixt a Believer and an Infidel, though expressed in very dark forms of speech; so that to form a proper judgment of the meaning, we must consider the character of the speakers, which will be a key to what is said. In discoursing from the words, I shall endeavour,

First, To consider that there is a Time or Season for every lawful and necessary Purpose.

Secondly, How we may make the best use of the same?

1. In time God made the world, and all things therein: he spake and it was done, he commanded and it stood fast; upon which *the morning stars sang together, and the Sons of God shouted for joy.* He hath made every thing beautiful in its season, well calculated to answer the design of its creation to wit, The honour of the Creator, and the comfort and happiness of the Creature; so that *the Heavens declare the glory of God, and the Firmaments*

ment sheweth his handywork. If we turn our grateful eyes to the earth, we see it arrayed in its rich attire, and filled with its Creator's bounty; so is the great and wide sea, in which are things creeping, both small and great, of all sorts innumerable, and all for the service of man. The alternative seasons of the year, and the various produce thereof, are replete with blessings to the needy sons of men; to supply our wants, and raise our gratitude to the great Author of all our mercies.

2. Man, whom he hath set over the works of his hands, having failed, and involved all in ruin, God in the fulness of time undertook his redemption, assuming his nature, suffered in his stead, the just for the unjust, to bring him out of captivity. In consequence of this redemption, the spirit is given to help our infirmities; to enlighten our dark minds; to soften our hard hearts; to quicken our dead souls, and to guide us into all truth.

3. That gracious God gives us a time and a season for all the civil purposes of life: *a time to sow, and a time to reap; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; a time to build up, and a time to pull down; a time to weep*, either for ourselves, or to shed the sympathetic tear with such as are in distress; *a time to rejoice*, either in God's mercies to us, or such as we are acquainted with; *a time to mourn* over our own follies and weakness, losses or crosses; *a time to dance*, a kind of a proverbial phrase, to shew joy and gladness, expressed by any outward sign which is lawful. In short, there is a time for labour and toil; for relaxation and repose; for familiar and useful conversation; for silence and retirement, for possessing or embracing any lawful enjoyment, and also for giving it up again; and, in a word, *a time to be born, and a time to die*; and for every lawful and honourable purpose during that short space, so that if that time is not used lawfully,

we lose the valuable end for which it is committed to our trust, as a talent lent us for a small season.

4. BUT if there is a time and a season for every civil purpose, much more so for those things which are of an eternal nature. REPENTANCE is a work of time, seeing there is no repentance in the grave, whither thou goest. And tho' we cannot repent of ourselves, yet Christ is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour to give that godly sorrow, that broken and contrite heart which is a sacrifice acceptable to God.* Now genuine repentance is not a little temporary sorrow, but a *confessing and a forsaking of sin, that we may obtain mercy.*† All need this repentance; for all have sinned, and the Almighty calls every man to repent, and without it we must inevitably perish. I presume, the true penitent finds little time or inclination for either trifling mirth or the laughter of fools, which is like the crackling of thorns under a pot. The time past more than suffices to have wrought the will of the flesh, and the eager desire is to be renewed in the spirit of their mind.

5. FAITH in the LORD JESUS is the business of time, and a season is granted to every one who hears, or may hear his name held forth for life and salvation. Without faith it is impossible to please God; for he that believeth not cannot see life, for the wrath of God abideth on him. He that believeth, sets to his seal that God is true; he that believeth not, makes God a liar; so horrible, so daring a thing is unbelief. A man is not born a believer, nor is he made such by baptism, a mistake, which I fear deceives many, and which hath occasioned many to lay that ordinance aside, seeing so little true religion either in the baptizers, or in the baptized, that both the one and the other, and the thing itself, are too often abominable. Nor is joining any particular sect, in this age of parties, the faith of the gospel, though

* Psal. li. 17. —† Prov. xv. 13.

too much stress is laid upon that, as well as peculiar tenets. The short of the matter is, the poor sinner is sensible that he is a sinner, and as a sinner, he enquires how he may escape the damnation of hell. He is pointed to Jesus, bearing his sins and carrying his sorrows, and hearing the report, he cordially embraces the same, and with his heart he believeth unto righteousness, and rests his whole soul upon the atonement made by the blood of an incarnate God. This is the faith of God's elect, and which justifies the ungodly; unites the Sinner to the Saviour, and gives ease to the bleeding conscience. Now we can neither hear nor read any thing of this faith in the world of spirits: Oh! no; every thing there is realized; what is now believed and hoped for, will then be fully enjoyed; every dark veil being rent from the top to the bottom, and all the glories of the kingdom of heaven unfolded for ever. Now is the time, the accepted time, to believe to free salvation; as such, delay not, put it not off for one moment, lest all be gone and lost for ever!

6. HOLINESS in all its branches is a qualification indispensably necessary; for without it there is no entering the kingdom; and there is a time and a season for obtaining this unspeakable blessing. The greater part of you know that holiness does not consist in a few empty ceremonies; nor a set of sentiments, nor any outside formalities. O! no; 'tis the hidden man of the heart; 'tis the mind of Christ; the kingdom of God fixed within; and that kingdom is not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. In this blessed composition, humility must take a leading cast; for God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble; and though heaven be his throne, and the earth his footstool, yet to that man will he look that is *poor, and of a contrite spirit, and which trembleth at his word.** O yes!

* Isa. lxvi. 1.

blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom. Love is another essential ingredient in this heavenly texture, and of such consequence, that there is neither holiness nor happiness without it. Very excellent things have been said of love. It is the first and great command; 'tis the end of the command out of a pure heart; it is the fulfilling of the law. It suffers long, and is kind; doth not behave itself unseemly; seeketh not its own; hopeth all things; endureth all things, and never faileth. In a word, *God is Love, and he that dwelleth in Love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.*

But as we are in a world of fallen creatures, we always need patience; not only with our enemies, and mankind in general, but even with our nearest and dearest friends, even with those of our own household. Equally necessary is resignation; for a wise and a gracious God may, in the course of his providence, be pleased to try us with wholesome and necessary crosses, as he did several of his eminent servants in the days of old, and in every calamity it is our duty, nay it is our privilege to say, *thy will be done. It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.* Let your humility, love, patience and resignation flame out in a holy zeal for the honour of God, and the good of our fellow sinners. But let it be the pure flame of love, and sweetly tempered with judgment. Let there be nothing of that foaming rage, which has too often usurped the venerable name of zeal, to the utter destruction of all that were the objects of its displeasure. With these precautions let it flame out with unabating ardor, so shall it be a pure fragrance unto God, and like the cheering rays of the sun after refreshing rain. In the mean time, let not sincerity be wanting, seeing that gives due value to the whole, and renders it sterling grace in the sight of God and man. For take this out of the composition, and the whole is mere dross, base metal, and can never pass current in the common-wealth of genuine christianity.

There

There was no guile in the mouth of Jesus, neither must there be any in his followers. § It was matter of rejoicing to the Apostle, to wit, *the testimony of his conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not by fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, he had his conversation in the world.* * Perhaps it was a jealousy from that quarter which made the Psalmist cry out, *Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.* †

7. Now if this light is within, it must and will blaze out, its fruits will appear, there will be times and seasons for the same. For the good man who *delights himself in the law of the Lord, is like the tree planted by the rivers of water, which bringeth forth fruit in his season.* ‡ The tree will be known by the fruit, and the fountain may be judged of by the stream. The good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; but the evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil; so that it is highly necessary that the tree should be made good before the fruit can be such; and please to observe, *What a man sows that shall he also reap; for it will ever hold good, that he which sows to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; and he that soweth to the spirit reap everlasting life.* ||

8. Thus does the universal Lord and Judge of the world grant unto man, in this his state of probation and trial, a time and a season to every lawful and valuable purpose, for all the civil actions of life, and for such as are of a moral nature; so will he be just when he judgeth, and clear when he condemneth. But as man is not a mere machine, and as he is made a rational creature, and through the offering of JESUS on the CROSS, a liberty of chusing

§ Rev. xiv. 5.—* 2 Cor. i. 12.—† Psal. cxxxix.—

‡ Psal. i. 4.—|| 2 Gal. vi. 8.

or refusing is granted him; he may, and too often does, abuse this precious part of his talent, so that in the time allotted him for labouring honestly, he may be stealing wickedly; and when he should be speaking the truth, he may be lying; and instead of being chaste, he or she may be impure; instead of doing the Lord's work, on the Lord's day, he may spend it in doing his own pleasure, doing his own works, speaking his own words, or thinking his own thoughts: Also, instead of reading the bible, he may be reading novels, romances, or the vile rubbish of the stage, that sink of infidelity; instead of being solid and serious, like a rational creature, he may be trifling and impertinent like a fool; in a word, instead of repentance there may be impenitence; instead of faith there may be God-dishonouring unbelief; and instead of holiness, without which none shall see the Lord, there may remain sin and filth; and then this must they have at God's hands, viz. *to lie down in sorrow and anguish.** Therefore let all the trifling, half-thinking wits take notice, that if they are answering the end of their creation, they would find no time for trifling and dissipation, folly, levity and nonsense; and however merry they may make themselves with the words of Solomon or the infidel whom he introduces, let them consider, and ponder it well, there is a time coming when he that is *filthy shall be filthy still*, and he which dies *unholy* must remain such for evermore;† so that when it is too late they may exclaim in unknown anguish, *the harvest is past, the summer is ended and we are not saved.*‡

II. SEEING these things are so, it is high time to enquire how this time, this season, which is granted us for every good and valuable end, may be improved? How may we gather up all the precious

* Isa. l. —† Rev. xxii. 11. —‡ Jer. viii. 20.

fragments, so that nothing may be lost! *He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear, and consider,*

1. WE are accountable to God for that precious talent which he hath committed to us, for such valuable ends as have been mentioned; ends worthy of a God, and necessary to be attended to by all his creatures. He is the divine law giver and moral governor of the universe, and to him all are accountable; for he is sure to bring, not only things known and visible, but *every secret work into judgment, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.* The longer, therefore, our space, and the greater our opportunities are, the greater is the account, seeing not a moment can pass without being surveyed by those eyes which are in every place *beholding the evil and the good.**

2. CONSIDER how much and important the work which is to be done in time is. Such a revolution must take place in the soul of man, as is called passing from death unto life, and being quickened, who before were dead in trespasses and sins; a being translated out of the kingdom of darkness, into the kingdom of God's dear Son. What clouds of darkness to be expelled from the understanding! What fetters of unbelief to be knocked off! What deadly rubbish of worldly-mindedness to be cleared away! A hard heart to be softened, and a carnal mind to be entirely subdued unto the will of God, and the soul made a habitation of God through the spirit, that she may be made a meet partaker of the inheritance of the saints in life. This life divine we are called daily to manifest, in spirit, in conversation; by the word of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left; watching all opportunities to do good to the souls and bodies of mankind, and so glorify God in our bodies and our spirits, which are his. Thus are we called to believe in and love

* Prov. xv. 3. — † Rom. viii. 37.

the Lord, to fight and conquer in time, that we may be more than conquerors through heterity.†

3. CONSIDER the shortness of time. All the pleasure resulting from the things of this life, admitting they are innocent and lawful, yet they are but pleasures for a season; and no sooner do we begin to taste them, but they are gone, and leave us disconsolate behind. The possession of health and wealth is but for a moment; the enjoyment of our friends, 'tis like a guest which tarrieth but for a night. History gives us an amazing insight into this. How soon can we run over the annals of many generations? The loud clamour, noise and uproar of a few elevated worms, filling the world with mischief and calamities, how soon is it silenced? and millions there are in the world who never so much as heard their names. The glory of Babylon made a great figure in ancient history; her walls, her gates of brass, towers, palaces, temples and hanging gardens, so as to be called one of the seven wonders of the world; the work of mighty monarchs and conquering princes, assisted by all the wealth and cunning art in the world. Where is she now? What says the prophet? *Wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures, and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces: her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged.** Now though all this was some hundreds of years in fulfilling, yet to show how trivial any space of time is, where all her splendor and magnificence has been described in the most pompous manner, it is said, *in one hour is she made desolate.†* Yes, so it will be said in a very short time of every thing here under the sun; all like rivers hastening to the great ocean of eternity. *The angel*

* Isa. xiii. 21, 22.—† Rev. xviii. 19.

*which stands upon the earth and the sea, will lift up his hand, and swear by him that liveth for ever and ever, TIME SHALL BE NO LONGER.** Now ye time-killers, ye triflers of the world, ye witlings of our day, ye half-thinkers, what can ye say to all this? Is it true? Is it rational? Can you deny it? Suffer yourselves to think a little, as well as jest, droll, laugh, dance and despise both God and man.

4. THE uncertainty of time is a very alarming consideration. We are certain of nothing herein, except the present moment, and indeed scarcely that. Hence every thing of importance is pressed upon us now. *To day, if ye will hear my voice, harden not your hearts. For behold, now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation. For as in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the days of the Son of Man.* Notwithstanding they were awfully warned, yet, being genuine *Free-thinkers*, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, 'till the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not, and, indeed, cared not, until the flood came and took them all away; so shall it be in the days of the Son of Man.† In the same free-thinking, or rather unthinking state, we find the stupid inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah; they did eat and drink, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded, quite careless and pitifully secure, promising themselves a long lease of sensual gratifications, and especially on the fatal morning when the sun rose with his usual splendor; but no sooner was Lot escaped, *but it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all.‡* In the same pleasing dream we find the rich fool solacing himself in his abundance, and singing a wretched requiem to his lusts, *Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for MANY YEARS; take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry.* But what is the answer

* Rev. x. 6. —† Matt. xxiv. 37, 38. —‡ Gen. xix. Luke xvii. 23.

of God? *Thou fool! this night shall thy soul be required of thee.** In this dreadful delusion how many are crying peace and safety when sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape; and, like *Belshazzar*, sunk in sensuality and dissipation, though *weighed in the balance and found wanting.*† Let every soul here take that wise, that solemn advice, *Be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh.*

5. BE diligent then in every means of grace. No end can be attained without the use of proper means. In common life, and among people of common understandings, we find this rule is properly attended unto. The husbandman well knows it is in vain to expect a crop, in harvest, without cultivating his land; so in like manner the tradesman, the soldier, the sailor, as well as the scholar. All these know the means are the proper way to the end. Nay, in many brutes there appears something of the same consistency, as if they had some end in view by several departments in which they act in life. So it must be in the christian avocation. As it is the duty of some men to preach it is the duty of others to hear; and as the Throne of Grace is accessible, every one is called to draw near; and as the bible is before us, we are called *Search the Scriptures;*‡ and it is the felicity of protestant countries to have the bible in their own tongue, so the blessed volume is exposed to every one. Social prayer and christian conversation are great privileges, and in the days of old were acceptable to God, and profitable to mankind; *for they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard them, and said, they shall be mine, in that day when I make up my jewels.* Now a man may go through all these means, and be fir-

* Luke xii. 13, 20. — † Dan. v. — ‡ John v. 39.

less, because he may trust in them; but he cannot be fruitful if he neglect them; as he who tills his land may sometimes miss his end; but 'tis in vain for him to expect a crop who tills it not.

6. BUT, as of ourselves we can do nothing, there is continual need of that gracious spirit, whose office is to guide into all truth, and who is to help our infirmities with groanings unutterable; to strengthen us with might in the inner man; to be a constant comforter to weary pilgrims in this dark abode. What is all knowledge, or what are all resolutions without this heavenly guest? All systems of doctrines, be they ever so clear; all outward forms, be they ever so specious; all modes of church government, be they ever so apostolical, without this heavenly paraclete, are like a body without a soul; mere dead images, being wholly destitute of spirit and life.

In most national churches, what is called religion, has assumed a parade and state utterly unknown to the apostolical ages, not only the formalities of different garments and habits, but in the pomp of creeds, articles and systems, too frequently enforced with no small tyranny; affecting something of a worldly kingdom, which he, who came in the form of a servant, utterly disclaimed. Nor is this the case with national churches *only*, but others also; as soon as they begin to lift up their heads a little, easily assume something of the same swelling pomp, as this nation can testify in different parts. Even in these the mystery of iniquity doth already begin to work, and if it were backed with human power, with national authority, the dear sweet LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE must soon expire. Power is a bewitching thing, and there are very few of the human race with whom it can be entrusted. O may our hearts be truly influenced with that spirit of wisdom which is from above, which is purest pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

This would put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, and would stop the mouths of our half-thinking infidels more than all the abstract reasoning in the world. Indeed the most acute form of words evaporates into empty air; but the spirit and mind of Jesus is like Mount Zion, which can never be moved, but standeth fast for ever. The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. 'Tis the spiritual worshipper that is truly pleasing to God; for such alone can worship in spirit and truth.

Having now dispatched, what I apprehend to be, the doctrine contained in the text; permit me to make a reflection or two from what has been said:—If the great concerns of eternity, the everlasting welfare of body and soul depend upon the short and uncertain space of time; is there any time for vain amusements, empty, not to say, sinful recreations, and all the soul destroying vanities which the wit of man has invented to kill precious time, and to dishonour our maker and hasten our eternal ruin: O, no! the language of reason, of common sense, of the bible, and of God himself is, *To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. Why tarriest thou, arise, wash away thy sins, calling upon the name of the Lord. Seek the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. Awake, therefore, thou that sleepest, and Christ shall give thee life.*

2. Did our blessed Lord give any such liberty of destroying time as some plead? Did he leave any such example in his life? And are we become wiser than he? or can we trace out a safer path than that in which he walked? Does his plan admit of any improvement? Are not all his works compleat? and were not his life and doctrine so too? The misfortune is, the generation of triflers, who murder and abuse the scriptures, pay very little attention to either the life or teaching of their incarnate maker; in fact, they say to the Almighty, *Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.* But let
such

such insulters of God know, that yet a little while and abused mercy will retort their own language upon themselves in awful majesty, more terrible than that which shook Mount Sinai, where he will speak to them in his wrath, and visit them in his sore displeasure, saying, *Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.*

3. I look upon two circumstances in our land, as the very sinks of the present infidelity, to wit, the entertainment of the stage, and ungodly preachers. The former of these, taking off and mimicking every character, the sacred majesty of heaven and earth, has not been spared by those infamous wretches, whom our laws justly call *vagrants*. If we look a little into history, we may easily observe a nation has been nearly settling to its dregs, when the vermin of the playhouse have been encouraged to crawl about and swarm in such abundance as it does at present in England. The Greek and Roman histories are dreadful instances hereof. Their courage, success, conquests; their truth and justice, probity and uprightness, all like the snuff of a dying taper, were expiring before the rubbish of the stage was so much encouraged.

In short, by that human insult, that devourer of time, and every thing which is serious and sacred, truth is turned into fiction, and fiction is made to pass for truth; yea the very truth of God is turned into a lie. Now it is truly lamentable that all this atheistical trumpery is so much encouraged from the highest character in the land to the lowest. No wonder that infidelity overspreads the land like a destructive inundation.

But if the players have slain their thousands, unholly ministers have slain their tens of thousands; for there are many poor, obscure villages where the locusts of the theatre don't come; it does not suit them; people have neither time nor money; but in every parish, at least, there is what is called a

church, and consequently a priest: but alas, how much worse would it be for the poor ignorant people if they had neither the one nor the other? Ignorant they are, and ignorant they could but be. As the matter is, they hear little to do them good, but see much to do them immense harm.

If the Rector, or Vicar, is a man of fortune, how does he dispose of himself? Does he expend his time and wealth in doing good, in seeking after the lost, in helping the weak and the needy? Is he eyes to them that are blind, and feet to them that are lame? Does the blessing of him that was ready to perish, come upon him, and does he cause the widow's heart to sing for joy? * Is he studying to shew himself approved unto God, a workman that need not be ashamed? Is he instant in season and out of season, not counting his life dear to him so that he may but finish his course with joy? Does he travail in birth with his parishioners, till Christ is formed in them? Ah, no: What does he do? he engages a poor hireling to do duty, as it is called, that is, read prayers, marry, bury the dead, preach once in the week, and consecrate and distribute bread and wine. In the mean time he, who has the charge of many thousands, is associating with the first-rate gentlemen, being an ample partaker in their sins; he is with them among the hounds, at the tavern, the gaming table, the race-course, the playhouse, or perhaps I might say, at the ————. Meanwhile he hears them swear, and I dare not say that he never swears or blasphemes himself; he keeps them company in their midnight revels, and consequently revels with them: Thus he watches over the flock for whom Christ died.

But what is the poor curate doing? Well, while his master is keeping the great sinners in countenance, he is doing the same among the poor rusticks.

* Job xxix.

He has neither fortune nor family to entitle him to the company of the Esquire or the Baronet ; therefore he must be content to take up with the company at the Clerk's house, namely, the singers, the ringers, or the poor churchwardens. With these he is very jovial, hears them sing many a merry catch, laughs heartily ; at a late hour they make a shift to stagger home, and tumble into bed. Thus, in general, the gospel is preached, and thus poor sinners are warned to flee from the wrath to come, or rather by these methods, and various others, are hardened in their sins ; in the mean time, at whose hands shall their blood be required ? Doubtless at the watchman's. *Shall I not visit for these things saith the Lord ? and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation.* Such a set of preachers, and such a set of hearers as have been described ?*—Thus, I say, these are the two great

* Some thought, at the time of hearing the sermon, that I was too severe upon the clergy, that many of the expressions were too strong. If there were none, or but a few which bore the description given, I should think so too ; but alas ! I fear it is too general a case. I highly esteem a genuine Minister of Christ, let his name or denomination be what it will ; but as for those whose lives are such as are described, can any thing be too severe ? The more sacred any man's character is, if his life is a disgrace to his profession, the more vile he is. If we consult the oracles of God, we shall find such men in a very awful situation, and their characters are drawn at full length in frightful colours. Take a few passages instead of many. *His watchmen are blind : they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark ; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand : they all look to their own way, every one for his gain from his quarter. Come ye, say they I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink, and to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant.** The prophets shall become wind, and the word is not

* Isa. lvi, 10, 11, 12.

great inlets of the present infidelity. Nor do I mean only the ministers of the establishment, but of every other denomination, who live in the same manner; for, I fear, among many of the dissenters the case is not much better. We see among them a set of fine gentlemen, risen out of poor lads, who pay very little attention to the painful work of the ministry. If they run not to the same excesses of riot with those, it is sometimes for want of ability, or for fear of the displeasure of some in their flocks. Otherwise, we find many among them will engage among the fashionable amusements, such as cards, plays, assemblies, and the like, places which gospel ministers have no business to frequent, seeing in so doing they are miserable examples to the flock.

Upon the whole, the end of our creation and of our redemption, is to glorify God upon earth, and to be ready whenever he shall call us hence, and for these valuable ends he hath granted us times and seasons. And sure I am, a nature so fallen, a world so crowded with difficulties, a set of infernal enemies so busy, so intent upon the eternal destruction

in them.* A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land. The prophets prophecy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means.* Look over the 34th chap of Ezekiel, and see what God says to the unholy ministers of that day. What says our Lord? *Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's cloathing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits.*† It would be an easy matter to multiply quotations of this sort, all which abundantly justify any thing said in the sermon. Nor do I confine the censure to the clergy of the establishment, though by far the most culpable, but to preachers of every denomination; if the charge falls upon any of the name of Methodists, I look upon them to be the most guilty of all men. In short, whoever answers the description which is given, let him take shame to himself, and amend before iniquity becomes his ruin.

* Jer. v. 13.—† ver. 30, 31.—‡ Matt. vii. 15, 16.

the human race, will leave us no time for the follies of the age—O no !

- “ Be this my one great business here,
 “ With serious industry and fear,
 “ My future bliss to ensure :
 “ Thine utmost counsel to fulfil,
 “ And suffer all thy righteous will,
 “ And to the end endure.”

Can our calling and election be made too sure ?
 Can our evidence for eternal life be made too clear ?
 Can the lamp of a believer shine too bright ? Can he be too holy ? or can he be too much like his crucified Lord ? In a word, Can he have too much of heaven and happiness in his own soul ? No, he cannot. Who then would not run for such a prize ? Who would not fight for such a crown, a crown of righteousness which fadeth not away ? A land of pure delight, where the inhabitants shall no more say, *I am sick* ; where the Lamb leadeth them to fountains of living water, and God wipes all their tears away !

P O S T S C R I P T.

LET any considerate mind reflect, seriously, what we are called unto, according to what is laid down in the foregoing sermon, and he will find little time, and less inclination, to squander away his precious moments in fashionable follies and empty pastimes, which are usually in vogue. How many, while in health, have pleaded a time for all things? and when they have met death full in the front, they have changed their note. The famous Earl of Rochester, who had pleaded the libertine's cause with too great success, would gladly have called back his mispent moments, as well as his licentious writings; but it was too late, the sentence was gone, and could not be recalled; he had just time to ask for that mercy which he had so long rejected, and to give a fair warning to the gay tribe of infidels which he had left behind him.

In like manner, how awfully does the infidel, which Dr. Young attended, bemoan the loss of precious time? The night on which he died, hearing the clock strike, he cried out with vehemence, "O time, time! how dost thou pierce thy murderer to the heart! How art thou gone for ever! O for a month! a single week! I ask not for years, though an age is too little for the much I have to do." I have attended many upon their death-beds, and not a few have greatly lamented their trifling away the sacred moments; and their consciences have smote them severely for the abuse of time. Every good writer takes notice of the valuableness of time. The case of Esau is very awfully referred to by the apostle, who could not recover the lost time and the lost blessing,

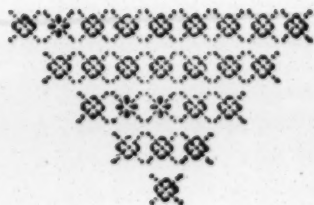
bleffing, though he fought it carefully with tears. Hence the fame apostle fays, *Walk circumfpectly, not as fools, but as wife; redeeming the time; literally buying up the opportunity, alluding to a fair or market, where the different articles are exposed, and they who want them must buy up that opportunity, and take them while the season is.*

TIME, like an ever-rolling stream,
Bears all its sons away;
They fly forgotten, as a dream
Dies at the opening day.

Infinite joy or endless woe,
Depends on every breath;
And yet how unconcern'd we go,
Upon the brink of death.

Waken, O Lord, our drowsy sense,
To walk this dangerous road;
And if our souls are hurried hence,
May they be found with God.

F I N I S.



6 SE 55

